



HEALTHY SOILS ARE: *high in organic matter.*

Newsletter article #3

Behold the benefits of organic matter!

Organic matter matters. In fact, there may be no other component that's more important to a healthy soil than organic matter. The tiny fraction of soil composed of anything and everything that once lived—organic matter—is more than an indicator of healthy soils.

The carbon in organic matter is the main source of energy for the all-important soil microbes and is also the key for making nutrients available to plants. Here are just some of positive influences high levels of organic matter have on healthy soils:

1. Provides a carbon and energy source for soil microbes
2. Stabilizes and holds soil particles together
3. Supplies, stores, and retains such nutrients as nitrogen, phosphorus and sulfur
4. Improves the soil's ability to store and move air and water
5. Contributes to lower soil bulk density and less compaction
6. Makes soil more friable, less sticky, and easier to work
7. Retains carbon from the atmosphere and other sources
8. Reduces the negative environmental effects of pesticides, heavy metals and other pollutants
9. Improves soil tilth in surface horizons
10. Increases water infiltration rates
11. Reduces crusting
12. Reduces water runoff
13. Encourages plant root development and penetration
14. Reduces soil erosion

To learn more about soil health, and to meet some of the farmers who are “Unlocking the Secrets in the Soil,” visit www.nrcs.usda.gov.

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